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# *A Half Century in Coastal History*



*David Stick*

*Together with Proceedings of a Banquet on the Occasion of the Presentation  
of the North Caroliniana Society Award for 1987*



NORTH CAROLINIANA SOCIETY IMPRINTS  
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by David Stick



# *A Half Century in Coastal History*


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*Together with Proceedings of a Banquet on the Occasion of the Presentation  
of the North Caroliniana Society Award for 1987*

*Chapel Hill*  
NORTH CAROLINIANA SOCIETY, INC.  
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AN AFTERNOON WITH DAVID STICK

*As a prelude to "An Evening with David Stick," the North Caroliniana Society invited David Stick to give a public address in renovated Wilson Library on Thursday afternoon, 15 October 1987. His subject, "A Half Century in Coastal History," provided a review of what in fact has been nearly sixty years in coastal history. His paper, preceded by an introduction by William S. Powell, vice-president of the North Caroliniana Society, is published herein.*



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## *Introduction of David Stick*

*William S. Powell*

To introduce David Stick adequately to an audience of people not acquainted with him in the six minutes allotted me this afternoon would be impossible. Since each of us already knows David I shall only touch the highlights. If you want to know more about him I suggest that a little later this afternoon, or this evening after the dinner, you seek out half a dozen of his friends, associates, or acquaintances and talk to them. From each you will most likely get a different perspective because David is many people in the form of one.

Although he was born in New Jersey and spent his first nine years there, he grew up to become one of the most concerned and loyal of Tar Heels. In colonial days both New Jersey and Carolina, as proprietary colonies, were owned by some of the same men, so there is a long tradition of shared interest in the two places.

David moved with his parents to the Outer Banks in 1929, attended local schools, was graduated from Elizabeth City High School, and was sent by his parents to an academy in Vermont in 1936-37, perhaps to test whether the tar on his heels was permanently affixed. Finding that it was, he returned to enter the hallowed haven of true Tar Heels, the University of North Carolina. That venerable institution recently honored him with its Distinguished Alumnus Award.

David discovered early in life that ink flowed in his veins. In high school he was editor of the school paper and in the summer was coastal correspondent for two regional newspapers. In Chapel Hill he was on the staff of the *Daily Tar Heel*, while at home in the summer he was managing editor of the local *Nags Tale*, feature writer for the *Coastland Times*, and summer editor of the *Seashore News*. During the years 1939 and 1940 he was a reporter for the *Raleigh Times*, but bigger things lured him to Washington where he was an assistant to the radio commentator

Fulton Lewis, Jr. Still bigger horizons loomed ahead, and from 1942 to 1945, during World War II, he was a combat correspondent with the United States Marine Corps. With the war behind him, but never totally out of his mind, he became associate editor of the *American Legion Magazine* with offices in New York, where he worked from 1945 to 1947.

Coming home at last, David began the career that I believe he prefers to be identified with above all others—that of author. Since 1949 he has written or edited eleven books—four of them published by the University of North Carolina Press. Three have been among the most widely sold of the Press's books—*Graveyard of the Atlantic*, *The Outer Banks of North Carolina*, and *Roanoke Island*, *The Beginnings of English America*. Each of these has gone through many printings and continues to be popular. His other books have dealt with Dare County, the Cape Hatteras seashore, North Carolina lighthouses, and a handsome book of his father's watercolors of coastal fish, among others.

As a businessman David has been equally as busy. He was the first licensed real estate broker on the Outer Banks. He has been owner, partner, president, or manager of a land company, a contracting firm, a motor lodge, a craft shop, a bookshop, and a publisher of maps, to name just a few of his connections.

His numerous public activities also cover a wide range of interests and concerns, and they have been expressed in tangible ways from 1938 until the present—and I anticipate that we have not seen an end to the list even yet. He has worked effectively with local and state civic clubs, chambers of commerce, tourist bureaus, zoning boards, storm rehabilitation committees, boards of commissioners, erosion control boards, recreation associations, the Coastal Resources Commission, the Outer Banks Community Foundation, and assorted other state and local commissions, committees, and editorial boards. Of many of these he has been chairman or otherwise in a position of influence.

I would like to note particularly, however, that he rendered very valuable service to the Carolina Charter Tercentenary Commission and to America's Four Hundredth Anniversary Committee, to "The Lost Colony" over a period of many years, and above all to the organization known as North Carolinians for Better Libraries. Tar Heels across the state owe sincere thanks to David for better library service in every corner of the state. Most recently his work with AFHAC produced good results in the publications and archaeological projects and in the construction of the *Elizabeth II*.



Some of us who have been privileged to serve in various capacities with David know that he has a keen mind and an ability to see a problem ahead of many of us—and to be ready with a recommendation for its solution. In all honesty I must say that he has crossed swords with many people; most of them have had the good judgment to realize, in retrospect, that he was right.

He has received many awards. The one from his alma mater I have already mentioned. The North Carolina Public Libraries Directors Association gave him their Distinguished Service Award; the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association presented him the annual Christopher Crittenden Memorial Award; the North Carolina Coastal Resources Commission gave him the Eure-Gardner Award; he was declared Citizen of the Year by the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce; given the Outstanding Citizen Award by the Dare Days Committee, and the Halifax Resolves Award by the Historic Halifax Restoration Association.

Whenever I see David Stick I think of the villagers that Oliver Goldsmith wrote about. When they looked at the local schoolmaster, he said, “They gazed and wondered, and still the wonder grew, that one small head could hold all he knew.”

This afternoon David Stick is going to share with us some of his knowledge in an address that he has titled “A Half Century in Coastal History.





## *A Half Century in Coastal History*

*David Stick*

In the late 1920s, when my family moved from New Jersey to the Outer Banks, there were four separate and distinct parts of Dare County which were accessible to each other—and to the rest of the world—almost exclusively by boat.

It is true that the now highly developed resort area from Nags Head to Duck was part of a peninsula, attached to Virginia; and you could, if you had the nerve and managed to catch the falling tide at just the right time, drive the hard-packed beach or “wash” from Virginia Beach to Kitty Hawk, and on as far as Oregon Inlet. But few people had cars, and fewer still were willing to undertake the hazardous journey. It was much easier to take the little car ferry from the end of the oyster-shell road at Point Harbor across Currituck Sound to Kitty Hawk. Even then, driving was tricky, for you had to deflate your tires carefully to spread out over a larger area, and then try to stay in the sandy tracks that meandered up and down the banks. Meeting an oncoming vehicle, and trying to switch over so your left wheels were in the right-hand track, was the ultimate test of your driving ability. To this day, under such conditions, I invariably remember the story, sworn to as fact by old-timers, that under similar circumstances the first two automobiles on Hatteras Island were involved in a head-on collision.

Unlike the Kitty Hawk–Nags Head peninsula, the two main population centers in Dare County—Roanoke and Hatteras—were islands in fact as well as in name, enclaves unto themselves. And the four villages on the mainland—Stumpy Point, Manns Harbor, East Lake, and Mashoes—were isolated pockets of humanity, each a little oasis, huddled on the fringe of a vast swamp some early explorer had called the Great Alligator Dismal.

Surprisingly, though, for all of the isolation and difficulty in travel, the residents of Roanoke Island, Hatteras Island, the northern banks, and the mainland were closer to each other and more interdependent by far than they are today.

Manteo brought them all together. Not only was Manteo the county seat,

it was the trading center as well. Centrally located at the confluence of Albemarle Sound, Roanoke Sound, Croatan Sound, and Pamlico Sound, it was the hub of a sparsely populated county covering a larger area of land and water—mostly water—than the state of Rhode Island.

Court Week was eagerly awaited—except, of course, by those scheduled to go on trial. The lists of jurors were drawn by lot from all parts of the county twice a year for the spring and fall terms. Throughout court week the jurors, litigants, and witnesses converged on Manteo, their boats tied up four or five abreast at the crowded docks and landings. The judge, and attorneys from Elizabeth City, Edenton, and Hertford, and sometimes even from Rocky Mount or Raleigh, came down on the steamer *Trenton* from Elizabeth City, having booked accommodations at the Tranquil House.

Court was the excuse, more than the reason, for most people going to Manteo. It was a time for families to gather; a time for women to shop—at the big general stores on the waterfront, Moncie's, or Charley Evans', or Uncle Dick's; a time for the kids to taste a treat long awaited, possibly a banana pop-sickle, double size, with two sticks; and a time for the men to do what men of all ages always seem to do on such occasions: brag about their boats, exchange ideas, talk about politics and the weather; comment on how good the fishing had been, or how bad; then brag some more.

There were three doctors in the county, two of them in Manteo, but only one resident lawyer—which sheds a bit of light on priorities. There was no dentist, no surveyor, and no CPA, but there were people in just about every community who could pull teeth, draw up metes-and-bounds descriptions of property, and keep accurate business ledgers.

Though the bank in Manteo—appropriately named *The Bank Of Manteo*—was the only one formally registered in Raleigh, there were bankers in every neighborhood in every community. They were the operators of the general stores. They cashed checks, kept reserve supplies of coin and currency in their combination safes, and made loans to their customers. Because of the seasonal nature of commercial fishing, which was the primary occupation in all parts of the county, the bulk of the business was on credit, and storekeepers encouraged their customers to put their purchases on the tab instead of paying cash. This was a logical approach, since few people had any cash; but some merchants, determined to attract customers to their places of business and then make certain they kept coming back, went a step further, charging cash customers the full amount but giving a ten percent discount to credit customers when they paid up at the end of the fishing season.

You could buy just about anything in the general stores. If the merchant didn't have it in stock he would order it for you, with assurance that it would come down on the next freight boat. Few fishermen bought nets. Most of them bought the twine in skeins and tied their own nets, often with the help of wives, children, parents, grandparents, and neighbors. So important was this work that one of my grade-school classmates was excused from school so he could help his daddy finish his pound net in time for the first run of fish. I tried it several times but could never quite get the hang of it, especially the essential part, making the mesh or "marsh"—the hole in the net—exactly the right size. Nets are machine-made now, of modern materials, though they still must be hung by hand and repaired by hand, and most modern fishermen still refer to that hole in the net as the "marsh."

The men in the Outer Banks fishing communities built their own boats, too, and their houses as well. The boats were skillfully crafted, following basic designs developed especially for the broad shallow sound waters, but usually with some slight modification conceived by the individual boat-builder. The houses, for the most part, were something else, and it was not unusual to see a handsome boat taking form in front of a ramshackle house. Such houses were put together with whatever was at hand, sometimes lumber washed up on the beach, or even salvaged deckhouses from wrecked ships—windows, portholes and all. Most of them were small and functional, with little concern for architectural design. In every community, however, there were a few larger houses, often of a traditional two-story design with a separate kitchen in the back, attached to the main house by a breezeway. Though many of the houses would not have been considered very much by city standards, and often remained unfinished for decades, house loans and mortgages were practically unheard of, for it was considered almost sinful to incur long-term debt.

One item you would have had trouble finding in the general store was a lock, for there was an inherited and ingrained code under which no one even thought of stealing from a neighbor, and almost without exception the latch-string was on the outside of the entrance door. On the other hand, anything that washed up on the beach belonged to the first person on the scene, providing of course he stacked it up above the high tide line and marked it with a stake or board driven into the sand.

Families were close-knit. Old people were respected, if not revered, and were frequently consulted for guidance and advice. Inter-marriage—cousin to cousin—was not unusual, because almost everybody was related. In each community there were one or two dominant family names: Meekins or Midgett,

Gray or Hooper, Perry or Tillett, or Wescott. At first, as a kid from New Jersey, I had trouble understanding what my classmates were saying, but gradually I began to adopt words and inflections from the Outer Banks idiom, though little remained after a year as the only southern boy in a Vermont prep school. Many natives of the Outer Banks, after years of military service or residence in other parts of the country, have lost their accent as well, a sad result of the process of homogenization to which we have all been subjected during the past half century.

What is the much-publicized Outer Banks dialect? I have come to realize that there is no such thing, for there were in Dare County alone, when I was a boy, at least a half dozen sub-dialects, and a person who listened carefully could usually tell whether the speaker was from Wanchese, or Kinnakeet, or Kitty Hawk, or someplace else along the banks. The question I have been asked most frequently about the Outer Banks and Outer Bankers is whether it is true that the older residents speak with an Elizabethan accent. My stock answer, for years, is that I have no idea, since I never had the opportunity to hear an Elizabethan speak.

I am an Outer Banker—by adoption rather than by birth—and it is important to understand that there is a subtle yet pervasive difference. I have lived here for nearly sixty years, not counting relatively brief stints in Raleigh, Washington, and New York, and a World War II tour in the Marine Corps, and I have felt at home since the end of my very first day at school in Manteo. As a nine-year-old Yankee import I had been accepted, apparently without reservation, by my Roanoke Island classmates.

The fights I had in school were about other things, boyhood things, and never about being an outsider. Once I became accustomed to going barefoot throughout the summer months and learned to ride a banker pony bareback and pole a skiff up a shallow creek, I had reached the point where I looked and acted like an Outer Banker. Friends from those boyhood days are old friends now, and I seem to feel more at ease with them than with many of the people from other places who have adopted the Outer Banks more recently.

It was harder for my parents to adjust to the change than for me. My father was a lifelong fishing enthusiast, so he could strike up a conversation on a subject of mutual interest with almost anyone he encountered. But, he had picked a bad time to leave New Jersey and his successful career as an illustrator, for the Great Depression had begun and the miles of Outer Banks property he and his associates had bought for a few dollars an acre just a year or two before were not saleable at any price. My dad, like most others in that



dreadful era, had to struggle to survive, with little time for fishing or enjoyment of the Outer Banks.

My mother had an even harder time of it, trying to cope with such things as that summer barefoot business, and learning to turn on only a few electric lights at a time because of the limited capacity of our Delco plant, though ours was among the very few houses with electricity. The most striking memory of my mother at that time was the expression of shock and horror on her face the first time my dad asked some casual visitors to join us for dinner just as mother was scraping together an assortment of leftovers for the family meal. What dad had come to understand but had never communicated to mother was the fact that it was an accepted Outer Banks custom to invite visitors to eat with you—regardless of the time of day or the adequacy of the larder—just as it was an equally accepted custom to turn down the invitation.

I began to understand the difference between native and adopted Outer Bankers the night I heard Dr. Johnson make a speech, which he began by saying: "I'm not one of you, but . . ." Dr. Johnson had been in Manteo for most of his professional life and had delivered as babies many of the people in his audience, but he was aware that some of them at least considered him an intruder, with no right to express an opinion at variance with the one most widely held. Later, when I became involved in local politics and community affairs, I experienced the same reaction when I disagreed with or criticized what the old-time native political leaders wanted. There is a new crop of natives coming along now, however, men and women like my sons, in their twenties and thirties, whose parents moved here from other places, and the old provincialism is seldom witnessed.

Isolation made the Outer Banks different—though probably not appreciably more different than other isolated areas in Appalachia and elsewhere. Isolation meant that a person had to do a lot of things for himself that others would be hired to do in more populated places; and of necessity there evolved a high degree of individualism and self-sufficiency. The fisherman doubled as a carpenter, mechanic, farmer, and doctor; the wife as seamstress, cook, soap maker, teacher, nurse, and part-time tier of nets.

The bridges changed all that, ending the isolation and signaling the beginning of the end for the tradition of individualism and self-sufficiency. The bridges were hailed by some as salvation for the Outer Banks, offering broad new vistas, new opportunities, and new prosperity. They were vilified by others, who feared an influx of strangers and strange ideas, and an exodus of the young, the able, and the curious. In a way, both have been proven right.

Dare County built the first bridge. Poor, little Dare County, with no cash in the coffers, borrowed money and issued bonds in order to build a bridge across Roanoke Sound connecting a sandy road on Roanoke Island with sand and no road at Nags Head. The man who came up with the bridge idea was Harry C. Lawrence, a dredging contractor. The man who caught the fervor and pushed forward with implementation was the chairman of the Dare County Board of Commissioners, George Washington Baum. Today, the replacement bridge across Roanoke Sound is formally designated the George Washington Baum Bridge, but in all of Dare County there is not so much as a Harry C. Lawrence lane. So much for vision.

Other visionaries, Elizabeth City men with access to private money, built the second bridge, a wooden span nearly three miles long across Currituck Sound, connecting the mainland with 5,000 acres of ocean-to-sound property the bridge builders owned above Kitty Hawk. The state, typically late getting into the act, tied the two toll bridges together with a sand-asphalt highway extending fifteen and a half miles on a course paralleling the ocean beach from north of Kitty Hawk to south of Nags Head. It was 1931, just two years after I had become an Outer Banker.

This was depression time, remember; not just depression time, but the time of The Great Depression. Yet, the decade that followed the completion of the bridges and beach highway brought more changes of substance to Dare County and the Outer Banks than any comparable period, before or since. Already, the federal government was anchoring the migrating sands of Kill Devil Hill with native woods-mold and grass, in preparation for construction of the Wright Memorial. The little Nags Head oceanfront community was expanding, new hotels, stores, and cottages were being built, and up above Kitty Hawk the bridge builders were attracting potential lot purchasers at their new Pirate's Den Dance Hall.

Two years later Frank Stick, my artist-author-developer-conservationist father, proposed in newspaper and magazine articles the establishment of a massive national seashore park on the Outer Banks, anchored at Cape Hatteras and extending from Beaufort Inlet to the Virginia state line. At any other time such a proposal almost certainly would have been ignored by politicians, overlooked by the press, and actively denounced by Outer Bankers innately suspicious of big government and jealous of the right to do what they pleased with their property. But this was a time of depression and poverty for individuals, of bankruptcy for Currituck Sound bridge builders, and of inability on the part of Dare County to pay even the interest on its bridge bonds.

On the other hand the federal government did have money, and a bunch of special new alphabetized programs for spending it, including the PWA and the WPA. Dad knew this, and the first step in his proposal for a national seashore park was a massive “beach nourishment” program that would involve thousands of unemployed men building sand fences and planting beach grass, and bringing millions of dollars into the local economy. The politicians, the press, and most folks on the Outer Banks grabbed at the idea, and soon transient camps filled with unemployed men, and CCC camps filled with unemployed teenagers, were being built up and down the banks, and every able-bodied man in Dare County had access to a government job.

WPA funds were spent trying to halt erosion at the endangered Cape Hatteras Lighthouse and building a “citie” of log structures at Fort Raleigh and a community building in Manteo. In the summer of 1935 at age fifteen I got my first writing job, turning out a weekly column of “Nags Head News and Notes” for the *Elizabeth City Independent*; and the crusading editor of that paper, W.O. Saunders, proposed a massive celebration to commemorate the 350th anniversary of the lost colony settlement on Roanoke Island. Saunders envisioned a pageant as the centerpiece of the celebration—the Oberammergau of America, he called it—with Roanoke Island natives living the parts year-round. He and his supporters turned to Chapel Hill for help, to Fred Koch and Sam Selden at the U.N.C. Playmakers, and to young playwright Paul Green, and a partnership evolved which remains to this day. Green came up with much more than a pageant, conceiving a new art form which he called symphonic drama, though on Roanoke Island where “The Lost Colony” begins its second half century next year, the people still refer to it as “the pageant.”

Summers at Nags Head in the depression years of the mid and late 1930s were the best of times in the worst of times. In 1936, as Dare County Bureau manager for the *Elizabeth City Daily Advance* and string correspondent for the Associated Press, I covered my first big story, an airplane crash early one morning on the soundside at Nags Head. As soon as I had sent off a one-sentence bulletin to the AP stating that two were dead in a plane crash at Nags Head, I started interviewing witnesses and taking pictures for my *Daily Advance* story. The piece got front-page play in the paper the next day, with a byline, and I was one proud sixteen-year-old reporter. In the excitement, however, I had forgotten all about the Associated Press until their nationwide newsletter for stringers showed up featuring my one-sentence report under the heading: “How Not To Cover A Plane Crash.”

In 1938 I was managing editor of a newspaper, the *Nags Tale*, which ex-

pired at the end of the season; and the next year I edited the *Seashore News*, which was an equally unsuccessful venture. Work on these various newspapers enabled me to become familiar with and concerned about problems and potential problems in Dare County and especially the expanding beach community, and I remember editorializing on control of unsightly billboards, on road problems, on the need for long-range community planning, and on garbage. The garbage matter was of special importance and urgency, and as secretary of the newly formed Beach Civic League of Dare County I appeared before the county commissioners with a request for an appropriation to enable Miss Mag Tillet to hire someone to help her pick up the ever-increasing quantities of garbage that she hauled over to Nags Head woods to feed her hogs. We got the full amount the Civic League asked for, \$150 for the summer, a figure pertinent today since Dare County has just purchased five massive transfer trucks to transport garbage from the transfer station on Roanoke Island to the land-fill at East Lake—garbage brought to the transfer station by a fleet of regular garbage trucks.

After four years on Roanoke Island and a couple at Nags Head, my dad built a permanent home on the beach at Kill Devil Hills, near the underwater resting place, just offshore, of two sunken ships. I learned to spearfish—goggle-fishing, we called it, since the first face-masks for divers had not yet been developed, and we had to use handmade Japanese goggles along with our handmade spears. Soon I was exploring shipwrecks up and down the coast, and getting information wherever I could find it on the vessels I had already located, and on others I might also explore—which is certainly a round-about way for a person to begin a career as an author-historian, especially one who could never remember all those names and dates in history class. Two dates I did remember were August 18th, the birthday of Virginia Dare, which was celebrated annually at Fort Raleigh; and December 17th, the anniversary of the Wright Brothers' first successful flights. I participated in these annual ceremonies at Fort Raleigh and Kill Devil Hill and experienced a feeling of personal pride when just about every plane that flew down the coast circled the monument in paying homage to the Wright Brothers.

It was that personal exposure to the places where history was made—to Fort Raleigh, and the Wright Memorial, and the shipwrecks in what someone else had called the "Graveyard of the Atlantic"—that instilled in me a desire to write about historic places and historic events in a way I hoped the reader would find interesting as well as accurate and informative.

By the time I returned home after World War II, tourism had become

the mainstay of the Dare County/Outer Banks economy. Growth in the beach community had brought problems, however, and with a willingness to say what I thought, and a typewriter at hand to make the words sound better, I seemed to become involved in seeking solutions to just about all of them.

A chamber of commerce was formed, then a second one, and finally a third, all designed to attract more tourists, and to be recognized as the official agency authorized to pick up inquiries about accommodations at the beach post offices. Some of us, not in the room-renting business but equally concerned about attracting more tourists, formed the Dare County Tourist Bureau and brought in a man named Aycock Brown to publicize all areas of the Outer Banks on an impartial basis.

As the resident historian I was concerned about the number of people visiting the Wright Memorial who came away with the idea that Orville and Wilbur were a couple of lucky young adventurers, when in truth they were self-trained scientists; or who thought the first flights were made from the top of Kill Devil Hill instead of from level ground at its base. My efforts, as chairman of the Wright Memorial Museum Committee, to have a museum built with funds provided by the airlines, aircraft manufacturers, oil companies, and others who had benefited most from what the Wright Brothers had done, ended in failure, though the Park Service subsequently built a modern visitor center at the site.

With more and more buildings being constructed closer and closer to the ocean, people began to take note of the dangers from erosion, especially when cottages started falling overboard in ordinary spring northeasters. As chairman of the Dare County Storm Rehabilitation Committee in the mid-1950s and of the Dare County Erosion Control Board a decade later I learned the futility of trying to halt the sea, and I became acutely aware that the installation of works designed to control erosion at one spot on the beach invariably has an effect someplace else, and the only answer is to build as far back from the ocean as possible. Unfortunately, many of those selling lots and building houses today have not yet learned those lessons.

Traditionally, government in Dare County was different from government in the other ninety-nine counties. With a small population spread out over a vast area, and a tax base inadequate to provide more than minimal service, those elected to public office had found it necessary to devise their own methods for running the county. The system had worked for generation after generation before the tourists began swarming in over the bridges. It was a system in which favoritism was accepted and nepotism acknowledged, but by the latter 1950s nonresident property owners were paying more than half the taxes, and some



of us, mostly younger businessmen, felt it was time for a change. I became a county commissioner—and chairman of the board—at a time when things were so bad that almost any change would have been an improvement. It was not too difficult to transform the sheriff's department, for example, from one with three part-time deputies driving their own cars and wearing street clothes to a modern police department, with full-time uniformed deputies driving county-owned police cars equipped with radios in 24-hour contact with the central station in Manteo. No county in North Carolina has ever had a better opportunity to replace decadent practices with modern ones and to become in the four years between 1958 and 1962 a model progressive, rural county.

For all of the opportunities to swim, and sail, and fish, and hunt along the almost unlimited expanses of ocean beach and estuaries, there was a distressing lack of conventional recreational opportunities. Those of us who conceived the Outer Banks Recreation Association, who borrowed money from the Farmer's Home Administration for a golf course, swimming pool, tennis courts, and clubhouse, or who donated the property on which the Duck Woods Golf Course and related facilities were located, took the initial step in providing recreational facilities, and the towns and county continue to add more.

In recent years, concern over the changes taking place on the Outer Banks has led to the establishment of a state park at Jockey's Ridge, an ecological preserve in the Nags Head Woods, and an Outer Banks Community Foundation to fund needs not ordinarily within the province of government, religious institutions, or other charitable organizations. The state has built a marine resources center, now formally named a North Carolina Aquarium, on Roanoke Island. The exquisite Elizabethan Gardens are a tribute to the foresight and fortitude of those associated with the Garden Clubs of North Carolina; and gifts from individuals and corporations in all parts of the state have made possible, as a cornerstone of the recently ended quadricentennial commemoration, the construction of the Elizabeth II, a ship modeled after those used by the Raleigh colonists, and the establishment of the Elizabeth II State Historic Site.

All together there are a dozen visitor centers, museums, and welcome centers in Dare County alone, offering historic sites and other attractions for tourists contemplating a visit. The new shopping centers are filled with specialized gift shops, new ones opening and old ones failing, season after season. There is a construction boom and a real estate boom, with land prices often a hundred times as much as they were as recently as the 1950s. The streets are crowded with expensive automobiles, driven by new-found millionaires, relatively recent arrivals on the Outer Banks who came here with little or nothing, recognizing

the money-making possibilities in condominiums, and time-sharing, and boiler-room type real estate operations. Unfortunately, many others, both native and adopted Outer Bankers, whose concerns and efforts until recently were concentrated on trying to make a decent living while helping to preserve the best of what nature provided, have now caught the money-making fever, often with an unrelenting fervor. In certain quarters—important quarters—greed and avarice are readily accepted as attribute and motivation on the new Outer Banks.

My retirement home on the edge of Kitty Hawk Bay nestles in a grove of ancient live oaks, bent and gnarled, some probably old enough to have been here when Raleigh's colonists first viewed the Outer Banks. The house stands up high, above the level of any storm tide ever recorded, and from where I sit at my typewriter I can look down on my dock and the little boathouse at the end, and gaze—often for long periods, when I really should be writing—at the broad expanse of Kitty Hawk Bay stretching south and west to the horizon and a thin line of trees that is Colington Island.

In the warmer months, there are almost always sailboats tacking back and forth across the bay, triangular patches of dull white canvas outlined against the grayish water; and the water, in turn, is highlighted in a thousand different places by sparkling sunlight, reflecting off the tops of little waves and ripples. It has long been so.

In 1900, this was the site of the main landing for the village of Kitty Hawk. The dock, then, was much wider than mine, and longer too, stretching out to deep water where the large sailboats could tie up. There was an ice house near the end of the dock, and a storehouse for nets and fishing gear nearby. Merchandise and baggage were transported to and from the end of the dock on two push cars, small flat ones with handlebars at the end, each on its own set of rails.

Almost everything and everybody bound to or from Kitty Hawk arrived or departed from the end of that dock. It was here in 1900, in my front yard, that Wilbur and Orville Wright first set foot on Kitty Hawk soil.

They came to Kitty Hawk separately—Wilbur first, to set up camp, then Orville a few days later with supplies and the parts for the gliders. If either, or both, had paused at the top of the rise and looked back to the south and west across Kitty Hawk Bay they would have seen the thin line of trees on the horizon that was Colington Island, and, if the day was bright, the sparkling sunlight reflecting off the tops of the little waves and ripples, and probably one or more sailboats, tacking back and forth cross the bay, as I do today.

Has nothing changed on the Outer Banks? Of course it has, and the change is clearly evident from the vantage point in front of my typewriter when I look toward the east instead of the south and west. Houses, permanent and seasonal, untold numbers of them, are crowded together on the sandy bluffs above the eastern shore of Kitty Hawk Bay. A long line of unsightly power poles rises above the landscape for as far as I can see, and two water tanks and a microwave communications tower stretch upward into the sunlit sky. Dimly seen, due east of Colington, is the curved crest of a hill on top of which rests a majestic monument, the Wright Memorial, testimony to man's ability to fly.

How different, this modern panorama, from what the Wright Brothers saw when they came to Kitty Hawk in 1900. There were no buildings, no poles, no towers, no monument, just a broad expanse of bare sand, with only sparse vegetation little higher than a blade of grass. The landscape was dominated by a massive migratory sand hill—Kill Devil Hill—with several smaller ones nearby, all known collectively as the Kill Devil Hills.

Of course, the Outer Banks have changed, and will change even more as man continues to intrude on nature's domain. But the governing body of what is now the town of Kill Devil Hills has imposed new height limitations on structures; and despite the seemingly rampant growth there is still an ever-increasing awareness of the necessity to respect the heritage of this place, to leave the ancient live oaks alone, to protect the purity of the waters, to seek a middle-ground between development and preservation. There is, as well, an awareness that the old traditional sources of income, commercial fishing and lifesaving service, have long since declined to the point where few Outer Bankers could have made a living in recent years if it were not for tourism; and people like David Stick could not afford retirement homes overlooking Kitty Hawk Bay, had the tourists and the tourist dollars not come along to take up the slack.

Fortunately, also, I still have a choice. I can look south or west across the bay at a vista little changed from the days of Wilbur and Orville Wright. Or I can look east, at the towers, and transmission poles, and the multitude of buildings, and wonder among other things how so many people can afford to leave their lights on all night long.

Before me now a great white egret wades in the shallows beside my dock, moving forward, slowly, almost imperceptibly, his long neck extended as he draws a bead on an unsuspecting little fish. A mullet jumps nearby, clearing the water by at least two feet, leaving widening ripples in the now still water where he landed. A dozen or more gulls stand on my dock railing, resting between fishing expeditions, one of them balancing with ease on a single leg,

all seemingly oblivious to the egret and the mullet, and even the two graceful swan, early arrivals on their annual pilgrimage to the Outer Banks, swimming lazily just beyond the boathouse. I look up, then, focusing on the waters across the bay and, sure enough, there are two sailboats over near Colington, tacking back and forth. Suddenly, it is all quite clear. Man has made an impact on the Outer Banks, taken his best shot, often without plan or proper aim; but the Outer Banks have survived, and—if you know where to look—have changed hardly any at all.





## II

### AN EVENING WITH DAVID STICK

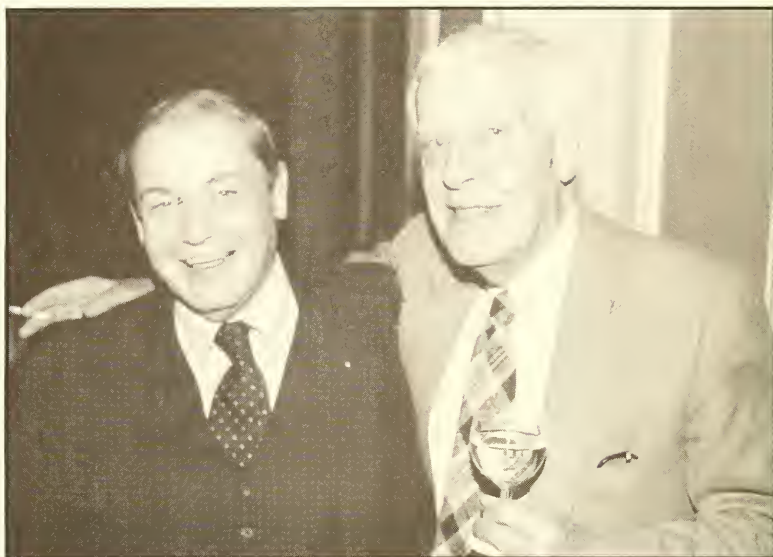
*On the evening of Thursday, 15 October 1987 in the Carolina Inn, Chapel Hill, friends attended a reception and banquet honoring David Stick on the occasion of his acceptance of the North Caroliniana Society Award for 1987. The award recognized Stick for his contributions to the enhancement, preservation, and promotion of North Carolina's cultural heritage. The master of ceremonies was H. G. Jones, curator of the North Carolina Collection and secretary-treasurer of the North Caroliniana Society, and the award was presented by Archie K. Davis, president of the Society. Speakers were Willis P. Whichard, Margaret Taylor Harper, W. Ray White, and McNeil Smith. Their remarks, along with the response of the recipient, are published in this the fifteenth number of the North Caroliniana Society Imprints series.*







*AT THE RECEPTION HONORING DAVID STICK: President Archie K. Davis with Dewey London and Mary Semans (top); George B. Tindall and Wesley H. Wallace (bottom). (All photos by Jerry W. Cotten.)*



*MORE FRIENDS OF DAVID STICK: Jerry C. Cashion and Richard Walser (top); and Ed Hodges and Jim and Betty Caldwell (bottom).*



## H. G. Jones, Master of Ceremonies

It is a pleasure for us to greet all of David Stick's friends. The crowd would have been even larger had we not declined the offer of others who wanted to be on the program to tell what they thought of David. We tried to explain that the North Caroliniana Society keeps its ceremonies civil, so they cancelled, saying that they weren't going to pay to hear somebody praise him.

We have good reason to believe that those at the head table will be civil, and even though you will hear from most of them later, may I identify them simply by name and ask them to stand and remain standing as I call on each. Please don't applaud; that would only encourage them. Starting from the north end, W. Ray White of Manteo, Leona Whichard of Durham, Archie K. Davis of Winston-Salem, Margaret Harper of Southport, Mary Louise Davis of Winston-Salem, Willis P. Whichard of Durham, Linda White of Manteo, and Jim Harper of Southport.

And, if you will take him, I am glad to give you David Stick.

There are two special persons in the audience I want to recognize —David's son Michael, who flew down from Chicago for the occasion, and David's longtime friend, Rose Liverman.

Knowing David, you will understand that we must keep him humble, so I remind him that he is not the first recipient of the North Caroliniana Society Award; in fact, he is the tenth. Some of our past recipients are still on speaking terms with us, and some of them are here tonight: Sam Ragan, Bill Powell, and Mary and Jim Semans. Another today for the first time missed a meeting of the Society, and I know you join me in extending our best wishes to Albert Coates, who is represented by that remarkable lady, Gladys. Gladys, after dinner tonight, will you please take the flowers to Albert as a token of our esteem and good wishes.

We are meeting on public property, and our double-standard courts have ruled that we can say nothing favorable to or about the Almighty, though everyone on or off public property is free to attack religion, so will you give thanks in your own private way and proceed with your dinner as you visit with your tablemates. We will be back after dessert.

[*Dinner followed.*]

It is relatively easy for us to organize one of these award dinners for a person who has devoted his or her career to a central purpose. But for one whose career has been so eclectic, there is not enough endurance in any of us to hear the full story in one sitting—or setting, for that matter. That's why we asked Bill Powell and David Stick to tell part of it this afternoon.

Even if the whole story is told, it will sound apocryphal, for who is prepared to believe that a New Jerseyite could become a passionate Tar Heel; that a boy who couldn't spell could become a successful newspaper editor; that a fellow who left UNC after only a year could become a leading scholar; that a tight-fisted businessman could build his private home around a library; that an aggressive real estate developer could become a dedicated environmentalist; that the antithesis of a Mugwump could record significant accomplishments in so many fields?

So tonight we will hear but a few snippets from the living scrapbook of David Stick, who rides side-saddle because he insists upon being all on one side or the other. No fence straddling for him. For those who want to weave the snippets together, may I assure you that in a few months we shall publish, in our *North Caroliniana Society Imprints* series, the full proceedings of this evening, along with David's revealing address delivered earlier today. And, as an appendix, we will include a bibliography of his published writings. A complimentary copy of the limited-edition booklet will be sent to those who made reservations for the events of today and tonight.

October is a month of meetings, and many friends expressed their regrets over conflicting engagements. Just three examples: Former Governor Bob Scott, tonight speaking 'way up in Jackson County, says "It is especially distressing not to be able . . . to honor my friend David Stick." Former Congressman Richardson Preyer, teaching a seminar at UNC-Greensboro at this very hour, wrote, "I particularly hate to miss David Stick. Please give him my warmest regards. . . ." And a note from Mary Alexander of Dare County: "When we retired . . . from Pleasantville, N.Y., over sixteen years ago, David was one of the persons whom we came to know and respect as a leader in the community. It is largely through his guidance that this town of Southern Shores is not experiencing some of the problems of other beach communities. His influence throughout the Barrier Islands is well known, and all his friends are delighted that he is receiving this honor."

Each of us knows David Stick in a different context, but I am confident that we all see in him the personification of persistence—one who, when he draws a conclusion, is seldom dissuaded. In fact, his tenacity, whether it be his highest virtue or sorest Achilles' heel, stands out like an artist's chop, distinguishing him from the proverbial Milquetoast so eager to avoid a vigorous, sometimes blistering exposure of the issue at hand. Those of us who have served with him have experienced both the vigor of his support and the passion of his opposition. David Stick has never taken a commitment—or a stand—lightly. Once committed, he will doggedly fight to victory or defeat. Prickly pears though they may sometimes be, let us hope that there are other David Sticks in the wing, for we have never needed them more than today.

Bill Powell in his introduction this afternoon discussed David's literary accomplishments—his reporterships, his editorships, and his authorships. Among those of us who write books, David's have an unusual quality: They *sell*. I believe all of his books published by the UNC Press, plus several others, are still in print. As an author, David is the envy of many historians.

Before calling on friends to discuss David's contributions in other fields, may I comment personally on his role in the quadricentennial of the Roanoke colonies. When Governor Hunt appointed me first chairman of America's Four Hundredth Anniversary Committee and gave me the rather startling charge of selecting the remainder of the committee, the names of Paul Green, Emma Neal Morrison, Bill Powell, and David Stick led the list. I knew from years of experience that little could be successful in Dare County without David's participation. Then, as I neared the completion of the list, I felt the need for minority representation, and I made a request of David that I was afraid he could not fulfill: to recommend another citizen of Dare County, a black, a woman interested in the first English colonies. In short order he proposed Margot E. Tillett, who has been a distinguished member of the committee from its inception. Later David wrote a series of folders on native Americans and the fine book *Roanoke Island: The Beginnings of English America*, served with Charles B. Wade, Jr., on the *Elizabeth II* committee, and was a major force in the four-year commemoration. My successor, former senator Lindsay C. Warren, Jr., who is here tonight, certainly will corroborate this partial recitation of David's work in the commemoration.

Now let us hear from three associates of David's in other fields of interest.



David Stick was in Washington assisting Mutual Broadcasting System Commentator Fulton Lewis, Jr., when Willis P. Whichard was born in Durham. Even after David returned to the Outer Banks and Bill Whichard grew up, they might never have become associated (for Bill's heart is in the opposite end of the state—his mother's native mountains of Clay County) except for a mutual concern for the environment.

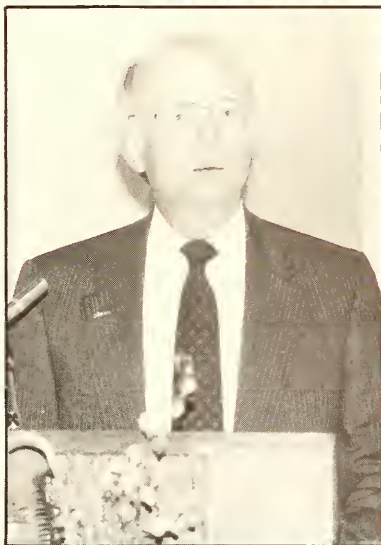
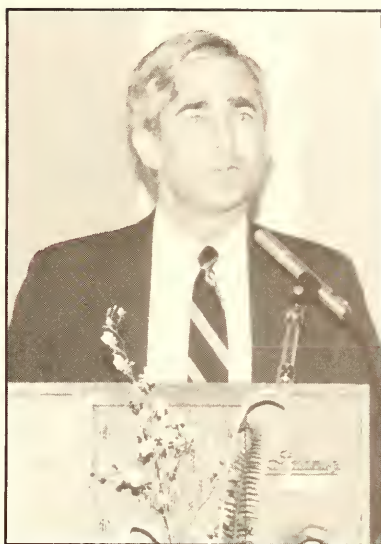
Their paths crossed after Bill at age thirty was elected to the State House of Representatives, where he served for four years before switching to the State Senate for six more. He joined the North Carolina Court of Appeals in 1980, and last year he was elected to the North Carolina Supreme Court. He is still a young man, but already he has earned distinction as the only person ever to have served in both houses of the state legislature and on both of the state's appellate courts. He also has the unusual distinction of having won separate awards of the North Carolina Academy of Trial Lawyers as the outstanding legislator and outstanding appellate judge.

But that is not all. He has occupied leadership positions in a variety of committees, study commissions, and civic organizations. Currently he presides over the North Carolina Institute of Justice. He is also a scholar and author, a renaissance man among attorneys. With his heavy duties on the Supreme Court, he is studying for a doctorate in juridical science at an institution up at Charlottesville, Virginia, from where, after receiving his education at Chapel Hill, he has already earned an additional degree of master of laws.

A member of the Board of Directors of the North Caroliniana Society, Associate Justice Willis P. Whichard.







*SPEAKERS AT THE BANQUET HONORING DAVID STICK: Left to right, top, Willis P. Whichard and Margaret Taylor Harper; and bottom, W. Ray White and McNeill Smith.*



## *David Stick: Protector of the Environment*

*Willis P. Whichard*

I must go down to the seas again,  
to the lonely sea and the sky,  
And all I ask is a tall ship  
and a star to steer her by,  
And the wheel's kick and the  
wind's song and the white sail's shaking,  
And a gray mist on the sea's face  
and a gray dawn breaking.

I must go down down to the seas again,  
for the call of the running tide  
Is a wild call and a clear call  
that may not be denied;  
And all I ask is a windy day  
with the white clouds flying,  
And the flung spray and the blown spume,  
and the seagulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again  
to the vagrant gypsy life,  
To the gull's way and the whale's way  
where the wind's like a whetted knife;  
And all I ask is a merry yarn  
from a laughing fellow-rover,  
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream  
when the long trick's over.

So wrote the poet John Masefield, and others have written in similar vein, inspired by the beauty, majesty, and power of the sea. Of these, Lord Byron perhaps most aptly expressed the role of humanity vis-à-vis the sea, when he wrote:

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean—roll!  
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;  
Man marks the earth with ruin  
His control stops with the shore.

“Man marks the earth with ruin”—so it has been. But must it always be so? Many North Carolinians were asking that question in the early 1970s. David Stick preceded them in asking it and readily involved himself in study commission and legislative efforts to plan and direct the future growth of our coastal region. David was a member of the committee that prepared the first draft of what became the Coastal Area Management Act. He was involved in the lobbying effort that led, after considerable time and change, to passage of the act. He was among those who insisted that the original draft be changed to include direct representation on the Coastal Resources Advisory Council from all twenty counties covered by the act and from the municipalities contained therein. This change proved crucial to ultimate enactment and effective implementation of the act.

David's greatest contribution was as vice-chairman (the first) and later chairman (the second) of the Coastal Resources Commission. During his term as vice-chairman he chaired a subcommittee that worked with the Land Policy Council to develop the land classification system called for by CAMA. He also wrote, and the commission published, a handbook on public participation in the development of land use plans in the coastal area. He worked with other commission members and staff in designating “areas of environmental concern” and developing procedures and uses relating to them. As chairman of the commission, he spent innumerable hours in Raleigh resisting efforts to weaken or repeal the act—so much so that ultimately he registered as a lobbyist.

Only the court of history can judge with finality the worth of David's contribution. His contemporaries, though, can say this much with confidence:

David's contributions are deeply grounded in continuity—his long standing personal and family ties to the Outer Banks, his connections with Dare County politics as county commissioner, and his active leadership in developing and promoting the CAMA concept through the comprehensive estuarine plan blue ribbon committee and other pre-CAMA forums. These preparations made him a natural and welcomed choice as a member of the original Coastal Resources Commission and gave him a running start when the commission began its work.

On the commission, especially during his tenure as vice-chairman, he was always at the forefront of every new policy and program. His probing questions and strongly held policy positions were always evident. Anyone with less background and credibility, or lacking his incredible energy, probably would have split at the seams—but not David.

It was the good fortune of the state and the region that David Stick was available to help lay the foundations of the CAMA program and shape the directions of coastal management in North Carolina in the 1970s. We are all too familiar with programs that generate strong support in their legislative phase but never quite achieve their expectations thereafter. That CAMA does not fall in this category, but has gone on to great success, can probably be credited more to David Stick than to any other person.

David Stick: environmentalist—developer. That is a contradiction in terms, some would say—an oxymoron, comparable to a law-abiding criminal, a pious atheist, or a pleasant grouch. David Stick has proven, in the words of *Porgy and Bess*, that “It ain’t necessarily so.”

Joseph Conrad wrote: “For life to be large and full, it must contain the care of the past, and of the future, in every passing moment of the present. We must do our daily work for the glory of the dead and for the good of those who come after.” The coastal region of North Carolina has a rich past. Due in no small part to the efforts of David Stick, it retains the prospect of an equally rich future both in our time and during the lives of those who will come after.





## *H. G. Jones*

I am not going to tell you where David Stick was when our next speaker was born. But their love for the coast, their affinity for the printed word, and their penchant for public service inevitably led to a longtime association.

Married to a newspaper editor, Margaret Taylor Harper took over the paper when Jim went off to war, and later she virtually ran the North Carolina Press Association as its secretary-treasurer for nine years. All the while owner and manager of the Stevens Insurance Agency in Southport, she nevertheless ranged from one end of the state to the other in public service. For example, she was president of the North Carolina Federation of Women's Clubs, the North Carolina Council of Women's Organizations, the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association, and North Carolina Press Women. Among the long list of other organizations and commissions that she has ably served are the Carolina Charter Tercentenary Commission, American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, Governor's Committee on Reorganization of State Government, Board of Governors of the Research Triangle Institute, North Carolinians for Better Libraries, and Advisory Board of the North Carolina Zoological Authority. She has been recognized by honorary doctorates from Greensboro College and UNC-CH, the Distinguished Service Award of Chi Omega, Woman of Distinction Award of the North Carolina Council of Women's Organizations, and this year was voted into the North Carolina Journalism Hall of Fame. For eight years she was a trustee of this University and served as secretary of the Board.

In business affairs, she has been a trustee of North Carolina Blue Cross and Blue Shield and is now a director of the Carolina Power and Light Company.

Margaret Harper didn't wait for someone to open doors for her; she opened them herself. By sheer hard work and determination she earned high positions in what was then a man's world. She holds the proud distinction of being the first woman seriously to run for a statewide office in

North Carolina, twice (1968 and 1972) making a strong showing in the race for lieutenant governor.

Margaret Taylor Harper.







## *David Stick: Promoter of Libraries*

*Margaret Harper*

It is ironic that the man who has done more for public libraries in North Carolina since 1960 than any other person doesn't use public libraries—doesn't even have a library card. Let me tell you why.

David Stick's interest in books began long ago and was fostered by his father, a gifted artist, who came to love coastal Carolina. This regard for books reached its highest point of public service to North Carolina in the 1960s when David discovered that North Carolina was spending on its public libraries only ninety-one cents per capita, compared with minimum national standards exceeding three dollars.

This remarkable man wanted all North Carolinians to have ready access to the books that meant so much to him. A member of the 1964 "Governor's Commission on Library Resources," Stick became immersed for the next six years in what became known as the Citizen's Library Movement of the '60s.

After receiving the Downs Report (Dr. Robert B. Downs was director of library services at the University of Illinois and formerly was librarian at the University of North Carolina), David Stick, though impressed with its content, thought it should contain a workable solution for aiding public libraries.

Consequently, his practical approach was to recommend the formation of a statewide Friends of North Carolina Libraries that would include book clubs, librarians, students, teachers, and officials and leading citizens in every county. The ultimate answer, he determined, was money, and he knew that four million Tar Heels had to understand and respond to the need.

David was appointed chairman of a special committee to prepare recommendations for inclusion in the Downs Report. He then wrote a foreword, which included a specific "Program of Action." As it turned

out, his suggestions were not given prominence in publication of the report, and the suggestion of a statewide committee for better libraries was left to swing in the wind.

It was not until 1966 that the first step was taken toward a statewide movement. With assistance from Bill Snider a concise statement of purpose was formulated, and with the blessing and assistance of the North Carolina Library Association a plan of action was developed. Six minutes is not long enough to relate all that followed, but the organization known as North Carolinians for Better Libraries was formed. Of course David Stick was elected as chairman. Then in 1967 there was created a Legislative Commission to Study Library Support in North Carolina. Governor Moore asked David to be chairman, but he was reluctant to accept, because he was retiring as chairman of North Carolinians for Better Libraries and had other projects on his mind. However, when the governor reminded him that the successful culmination of all prior efforts rested with the General Assembly, Stick accepted the responsibility.

When the commission's work was finished, the chairman proposed that members divide the task of contacting each member of the upcoming General Assembly prior to the start of the session (realizing that they would be competing with a number of worthwhile projects), but the other members were not willing for various reasons to assume equal responsibility. It was then, in what was his most frustrating moment, that he blurted out "If we can't do it as a team, then I'll do it myself."

So he hand-delivered to each of the 170 members of the General Assembly a copy of the report and explained to each what the commission believed to be the answer to library needs. He traveled 5,306 miles in the months between election day and the opening of the 1969 session, paying all expenses of these trips out of his own pocket, then followed up with spending considerable time in Raleigh to continue his lobbying. The recommendations were approved, but only half the requested funds were allocated. However, in the ensuing biennium appropriations for public library support were more than doubled, undoubtedly the result of David's activity.

In the fall of 1969 David Stick was named to honorary lifetime membership in the North Carolina Library Association. The citation stated that "For many years no one person has devoted so much time and energy toward arousing North Carolinians to action in behalf of public libraries."

But turn your attention with me to another facet in the life and

activities of this man whom we honor tonight. David Stick began serious research on the history of coastal North Carolina in the late '40s. Because of the distances he had to travel, he realized that he was spending an inordinate amount of time and money on trips to Chapel Hill, Washington, and even more distant places, so he started buying the important books in order to do his research at home.

During a period of residency in New York City he had become acquainted with antiquarian bookmen and bookshops dealing in out-of-print books and maps. So he built up for himself a basic library of North Caroliniana.

By the late '50s he had a great idea—to become an antiquarian book dealer himself! Earlier he had bought duplicates so he put out a catalog and was in business, a business that helped him buy more books!

In 1962 he opened his shop in Kitty Hawk and for the next fourteen years put aside the first copy of any item that dealt with North Carolina. Eleven years later he built a new home and library, moved his marvelous collection there, disposed of his various business interests, and settled down to resume his research and writing about the coast.

Jim and I were privileged to have a conducted tour of that extensive library—a manuscript room, fiction room, map room, periodical room, study and general library, all properly heated (or cooled) and correctly humidified.

It would take a long time to describe the collection, so perhaps the shortest way would be in linear feet: 10 feet about shipwrecks, 37 feet on Raleigh's Roanoke colonies, 14 feet on the Revolution, 35 feet on natural history, 48 feet of biographies, 23 feet on education, 8 feet of colonial records—and this only scratches the surface!

There are 3,715 manuscript items pertaining to the United States Lifesaving Service and Coast Guard activities on the North Carolina coast, including 3,131 wreck reports prepared by keepers of the lifeboat stations. There is more and more. It is the most important collection of North Caroliniana in this state or any other with the exception of H. G. Jones's North Carolina Collection here in Chapel Hill.

And now David Stick has given it to the state of North Carolina, which is presently constructing a new building (properly heated, cooled, and dehumidified) at the *Elizabeth II* State Historic Site at Manteo. It is to be called "The Outer Banks History Center" because, quite characteristically, David objected to the proposal that it be called "The David Stick

Museum.” It will house not only his extensive collection but also the paintings of his father, Frank Stick, who introduced David to the Outer Banks and from whom David perhaps inherited his appreciation of the coast. It will be used by future scholars doing research on this state’s fascinating past.

Is it any wonder that we honor this extraordinary man tonight?





## *H. G. Jones*

David Stick was off with the Marine Corps as a war correspondent when W. Ray White was born across Croatan Sound at Mann's Harbor. He was only a boy, therefore, when after the war David returned to the Outer Banks and resumed his eventful career.

Ray went off to East Carolina University and the School of Banking of the South at Louisiana State University, then returned to join Planters National Bank, where he is now senior vice-president and city executive at Manteo. That's the way he makes his living, but obviously he spends much of his time in other public service. Examples: He is past chairman of the Dare County Tourist Bureau, Outer Banks Toast Masters, and Outer Banks Ducks Unlimited. He is past member of the Governors Council on Tourism. At present he is chairman of the Dare County ABC Board and Friends of the Nags Head Woods; vice-president of the Outer Banks Community Foundation; and treasurer of the Roanoke Island Historical Association, Outer Banks Recreation Association, and the North Carolina Waterfowl Trust.

Ray White has grown up in the shadow of David Stick, and he will tell us about David's contributions to the Outer Banks of North Carolina.





## *David Stick: Outer Banker*

*W. Ray White*

I was both surprised and honored when I was asked to speak about David Stick's impact on the Outer Banks, for he is a man I have long admired and respected. I was born across the sound from where David lived, but during my early childhood his accomplishments were constantly echoing over those waters. I often overheard his name being mentioned in community circles as an outspoken young man, who was involved in most major events, as our poor county struggled to come into its own.

As I grew older and was afforded the opportunity to work with David in community and civic affairs, three things became apparent to me: He was controversial, he was long-winded, and he was thorough. I soon found that if you were involved in a project with David, you were expected to work hard and attend long meetings because he *would* accomplish his objectives. His philosophy is to identify a need, find a solution, and move on to another need. After all the major obstacles have been overcome, he is ready to turn over the management to other people so he can approach and solve yet another problem. It is this attitude that has allowed him to accomplish so much. His involvement in shaping the Outer Banks is evident throughout his past accomplishments, though his presence is continually felt today as civic and community leaders continue to seek his advice and counsel as our county continues to grow and new problems arise.

David Stick's accomplishments on the Outer Banks have covered all aspects of life. He moved to Skyco on the south end of Roanoke Island when he was nine years old and attended the public school in Manteo. In the mid 1930s his family moved across the sound to the beach. His interest in writing became evident early when he got a job at age fifteen as a correspondent for the *Elizabeth City Independent*. The next year he was Dare County Bureau Manager for the *Daily Advance*. By the end of



the 1930s he had edited two newspapers on the beach, the *Nags Tale* and the *Seashore News*. It was a decade later, after his return to the Outer Banks, that he stopped writing for pay and started writing what he wanted to write, whether the pay was there or not. That started his career as the historian of the Outer Banks. In 1949 he had to borrow money to publish his first book, *Fabulous Dare*. Ten more books followed, all dealing with the Outer Banks, and more than one-quarter million copies of his books have been sold. It was during this time, with the now sporadic income of a writer of books on history, that David turned to private enterprise as a means of supporting his wife and three sons. He became involved as a motel operator, land developer, map publisher, contractor, realtor, and bookstore owner—all at one time. Several of the businesses that David funded are now among the largest and most successful on the Outer Banks, though he likes to point out that others have failed.

He spent twenty years during this period developing Southern Shores, a carefully planned community nestled between the ocean and sound, with large lots full of old oaks and Spanish moss. After his retirement, at a time when developers and property owners were normally at odds, the residents of Southern Shores insisted that developer David Stick serve as their first mayor—their way of showing appreciation for his foresight in the proper planning of their town.

David's leadership traits became apparent early on. He had the ability to analyze and come to grips quickly with problems. He was not bashful and would speak his mind openingly and forcefully against all odds. As early as 1939, as a teenage editor, he was organizing a beach civic league in Dare County, and soon after his return following World War II, he became active in the promotion of tourism, serving first as Chamber of Commerce president and then as organizer of the Dare County Tourist Bureau. In the late 1950s, concerned with the lack of planning, he presided over a two-day planning seminar, locked in a motel room with people from different areas of the county and diverse backgrounds, to identify the area's most pressing problems and to establish priorities in solving them. This started our county on a much needed plan of action.

Long concerned about outdated government practices, his entry into politics came when he tried to talk a Buxton friend into running for county commissioner, only to have the man respond by asking, "Why don't you run?" David contemplated this question on the drive up from Hatteras Island and the ferry ride across Oregon Inlet, and before returning home

drove to Manteo and filed for county commissioner. He was elected each time he ran, and he served from 1958 to 1962 as a member and chairman. David once said there were two forms of county government in North Carolina prior to this time—one for ninety-nine counties as required by the *General Statutes*, and one for Dare County devised by its local politicians. This was soon changed.

One of the many significant contributions made by David on the Outer Banks was the organization of the Outer Banks Recreation Association and the Duck Woods Golf Course. One of David's companies donated the land for the golf course and related recreational facilities, and he served as president during some trying times. His foresight in this project, as in others, was a tremendous asset.

None of these accomplishments, however, is as important and far-reaching as the Outer Banks Community Foundation. David conceived it, brought others like me into it, personally led what was probably the most successful fund-raising campaign ever conducted in the area, and when money was available for grants, he headed up an exhaustive study of unmet charitable needs. The Outer Banks Community Foundation is already a firmly established mechanism for continuing to help Dare County and the Outer Banks, as David has done for so many years in the past. His influence and vision cannot be fully measured today, as he continues to play an important role in shaping the future of the area we both love.





## H. G. Jones

Now, David, we knew that you would brainwash any speaker known to you in advance. We decided, therefore, to spring upon this audience—and upon you—an associate of exactly half a century ago—perhaps the first person for whom you ever worked. “Worked” may not be the right word, but at least you answered to him.

On pages 196 and 197 of the *Yackety-Yack* of 1937–38 is pictured the staff of the *Daily Tar Heel*—twenty-eight male students, not a single female. The head of that sexist group was Editor “J. Mac Smith,” and one of the freshman reporters was “David Z. Stick.”

McNeill Smith didn’t think that he could be here tonight because of a court case, but it is to our good surprise that at the last minute he was able to come for this reunion with his brash and verbose reporter. Ladies and gentleman, the only North Carolinian among the *National Law Review*’s list of one hundred most powerful attorneys in America, former state Senator McNeill Smith.





## *David Stick: Freshman Reporter*

*McNeill Smith*

In 1937–38 David Stick was a feisty freshman reporter on the *Daily Tar Heel*. He did not restrain himself to assignments by the editor or managing editor but was always coming up with his own suggestions for editorials and feature stories that he said “ought to be done.” He wanted to waste no time in publishing his visions. He was impatient to get things done. His ideas were good, his sense of injustice keen. This was a great citizen-in-the-making.

In one editorial he argued that the student body should be limited to 3,000. “We like Carolina as it is,” he wrote. “It must not become a huge machine lacking the qualities we want Carolina to have.” He continued: “So before rejoicing too much over the addition to the athletic plants, infirmary annexes, and medical centers, shouldn’t we find out if these improvements are forerunners of a larger, impersonal, un-Chapel Hillish Carolina?”

He did pledge Delta Kappa Epsilon, which shows the variety of his inclinations. He defeated Skipper Bowles for the student council. I predicted he would be a campus leader if he had the patience to stay in school. He was in the Deke tradition of the fraternity with the widest range of extreme characters: some very, very good and some very, very bad. David would tip the scales to the good side.

We didn’t, however, have the privilege of his companionship for long. I went off to law school at Columbia. David did something else. But I remembered the friendship and wanted to keep up with him.

From time to time I’d hear of David being here or there, editing or writing, serving in the war. David Stick’s name stuck in my mind.

One episode is particularly memorable. During the war in early 1945 my sister and a group of other Carolina coeds had graduated, gone to work in New York City, and established an apartment that was a very

popular place for Carolina servicemen and others coming through Gotham. David Stick was one of those visitors, and he visited these young ladies several times. There were my sister from Rowland, Ruth Bond from Edenton, Allie Bell from Pittsboro, Katherine Manning from Williamston. David took them out and they took him in. Ruth Bond may have been his favorite.

One night all the girls in the apartment had gone to the movies at one of the big theatres in New York—it may have been Radio City Music Hall. When the newsreel came on the lead story was the massive amphibious landing of American forces on Leyte in the Philippines. Suddenly who should be the biggest face on the screen but David Stick. The Carolina girls immediately screamed: “That’s David! That’s David!” The whole house applauded. Everybody in the theatre turned around: “Tell us about David. Who is he? How do you know him?”

At least for once that audience of hard-hearted, anonymous New Yorkers felt a sense of family with these girls and with each other. Here was a moving picture of a young American Marine landing on the Philippines that someone in that audience knew really well, and they could all reach out and touch.

The girls in the apartment posted a picture of David, hung the flag, and made the next week “David Stick Week” in New York. He was the hero—and not just for a week.

In the intervening years I heard from David occasionally. I bought his books. I rarely saw him.

In the 1970s one of the major bills introduced in the General Assembly was the Coastal Area Management Bill. David was very helpful in the drafting, and after the bill passed in 1974 he served on the Coastal Resources Commission. That was a controversial, thankless but vital job. David knew a lot about the “Graveyard of the Atlantic,” the history and fragility of the Outer Banks, and the great resources of the sounds and estuaries that are unique to North Carolina.

David is a friend that you can call up and talk to without having to be reintroduced and start all over again. You just pick up where you left off. You know he is there, fighting the good fight, not waiting to be told what to do, but taking the lead.

David writes books, he says, because he “wants people to read them.” He wants more than that. He wants them to do something. He doesn’t do it for profit; he is a prophet even in his own country. He is still

preaching about North Carolina and what we should be doing today as citizens and fellow inhabitants of this place. The translation I like best from the Old Testament is “Where there is no vision the people get out of hand.” David Stick has always projected visions for the people.







## H. G. Jones

When Archie Davis received his bachelor's degree from this University fifty-six years ago, he really wanted to go on for a graduate degree in history. But it was in the depths of the Great Depression, and he could not afford to decline a lowly bank job in Winston-Salem.

So he went to work. Some say he has done right well as a banker.

But he couldn't forget his youthful ambition, and forty years later he began daydreaming about shucking his daily banking hours and returning to Chapel Hill. He shared that pipe dream with a number of friends, who, after the initial shock, humored him with remarks like "What a fine idea!" and assumed that the aberration would soon pass.

Even when Archie showed up on the campus and enrolled in graduate school, there were those who thought that a semester or so would wake him up. Not so. At age sixty-four he completed his course work and thesis and was awarded the master's degree.

Ambition fulfilled. Wrong.

Archie continued in graduate school and became the first and only person ever to complete and defend a dissertation without bothering with all the technical requirements for the doctorate. His 1,300-page, three-volume, fourteen-pound manuscript became the basis of his award-winning book, *Boy Colonel of the Confederacy*, published by the UNC Press.

Ambition fulfilled. Wrong.

Archie is at work on another book, and he has registered for the fifteenth consecutive year and vows to remain on the University's rolls regardless of his age. Ladies and gentlemen, my perennial pupil, who is also my boss as president of the North Caroliniana Society, Archie K. Davis.





## *Presentation of the North Caroliniana Society Award*

*Archie K. Davis*

Thank you, H. G. Honored guests, members of the Society, and friends. In June 1985, the North Caroliniana Society Award was presented to our friend and associate, Bill Powell. One of the principal speakers on that memorable occasion was none other than David Stick, our distinguished recipient this evening. Acknowledging that both had been friends for years and had studied North Carolina history under Hugh Lefler and Chris Crittenden, we recall that David wasted no time in characterizing himself as "a garrulous Outer Banker" who had become a recognized authority on North Carolina history largely because of Bill Powell's influence and direction. On the other hand, he was not loathe to suggest that Bill's future success as a teacher had undoubtedly been assured by the fact that "if he could teach North Carolina history to David Stick he could teach it to anyone."

Well, these two famous authorities on North Carolina history were together on the same platform this afternoon in the newly renovated and expanded facilities of the North Carolina Collection in Wilson Library. Many of us were privileged to hear David Stick's magnificent address entitled "A Half Century in Coastal History." He was introduced by Bill Powell whose portrait had just been unveiled. The place and timing were simply perfect, especially as we near the end of North Carolina's quadricentennial observance, for these two authorities contributed mightily to its planning and successful implementation.

I must now refer to our friend and colleague, Dr. H. G. Jones, who, as you know, succeeded Bill Powell as the curator of the North Carolina Collection and has been the guiding genius of our Society since its inception. You may rest assured that every minute of this program, from be-

ginning to end, has been analyzed and minutely scrutinized to the last detail, for H. G. is no generalist. It was he who decided that David could not possibly cover fifty years of coastal history in less than fifty minutes. With Bill Powell providing the introduction perhaps another ten to fifteen minutes would be involved, leaving very little time for other tributes to our honoree.

So, for the first time in the history of the Society, H. G. decided that this twelfth annual meeting must be divided into two parts, with the afternoon session devoted to David's introduction and address, and the evening session reserved for special after-dinner tributes and the presentation of the award. Finally, as you have probably observed, nothing was left to chance. Each of the four preceding speakers was admonished to limit his remarks to six minutes. I was given three.

In the light of the many encomiums, so warmly tendered and so richly deserved, may I, David, on behalf of your friends and admirers, simply express our profound gratitude for your love of history, for the magnitude of your long and eventful research and writings, for your rare facility of expression, for your restless and enterprising nature that has propelled you into many fields of endeavor, for your driving determination to succeed and to contribute, and finally, but far from least, for your high sense of public service—all so richly intertwined with your abiding affection for the land of your adoption. New Jersey's loss many years ago was surely North Carolina's eternal gain. David, it is with great pride and satisfaction that we are privileged to present to you the 1987 North Caroliniana Society Award, which reads as follows:

The North Caroliniana Society,  
in recognition of his public service and  
of his promotion, enhancement, production, and  
preservation of the literature of his adopted state,  
presents its  
North Caroliniana Society Award  
to  
David Stick  
October 15, 1987.





*THE NORTH CAROLINIANA SOCIETY AWARD FOR 1987. At top, President Archie K. Davis reads the citation while presenting the award to David Stick, who, in lower photo, gives his response.*



## *Response*

*David Stick*

Throughout my life I have heard references to self-made men. There may be such individuals, women as well as men, whose ability and tenacity have enabled them to accomplish much in life without help of any kind. But, I am not one of them.

Of all of the accomplishments for which I have been given credit, none would have been possible were it not for people who perceived in me the ability to accomplish more than I felt I could—and who then opened the doors for me, and as often as not pushed me through.

It was my father who gave me a beat-up portable typewriter when I was thirteen, who insisted that I not be satisfied with mediocrity, and who taught me, by example, that it is no more difficult to attempt something on a large scale than on a small one.

It was my mother, almost stone-deaf from the time of my birth, from whom I learned to adapt to circumstances, to accept my limitations without remorse, and to seek out uncommon ways to get things done.

At every period of my life there seemed to be someone—hundreds and hundreds of them in total—interested enough in me or my ideas to make suggestions, to give advice, to offer jobs or lend me money, to criticize and propose alternatives, and above all else to encourage my efforts when encouragement was most needed.

The three speakers here tonight, for example—and friend Jones as well—have emphasized my accomplishments in what were really joint efforts. Willis Whichard provided a role model for me to follow in the search for ways to provide protection, preservation, and orderly development of our coastal resources. Margaret Harper was there, at my side or in front of me, throughout the statewide library movement in the 1960s, and without her there would have been no North Carolinians for Better Libraries. Ray White, the only native among the organizers of the Outer

Banks Community Foundation, was the one to whom I turned when there were serious problems, and he always responded with enthusiasm and ability. And, through the years H. G. Jones has been one of the professional historians to whom I looked for guidance, who filled the voids resulting from my lack of professional training, and who always seemed to consider my work as important as their own.

These, and many others, have been my patrons. They have guided me, and pushed me, and encouraged me, all the while putting up with my contrary ways. It is on behalf of them, my patrons—as well as David Stick—that I accept with deep appreciation the North Caroliniana Society Award for 1987.







### III

*Bibliography of the Publications of David Stick  
For the Years 1935-1987*





*Bibliography of the Publications of David Stick  
for the years 1935–1987*

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1948

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The North Caroliniana Society,  
in recognition of his public service and  
of his promotion, enhancement, production, and  
preservation of the literature of his adopted state,  
presents its  
North Caroliniana Society Award  
to  
DAVID STICK  
October 15, 1987

  
Archie K. Davis  
President

  
H. G. Jones  
Secretary-Treasurer



# The North Caroliniana Society, Inc.

North Carolina Collection  
Wilson Library 024-A, UNC Campus  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514

Chartered by the Secretary of State on 11 September 1975 as a private nonprofit corporation under provisions of Chapter 55A of the *General Statutes of North Carolina*, the North Caroliniana Society is dedicated to the promotion of increased knowledge and appreciation of North Carolina's heritage. This it accomplishes in a variety of ways: encouragement of scholarly research and writing in and the teaching of state and local history; publication of documentary materials, including the numbered, limited-edition *North Caroliniana Society Imprints* and *North Caroliniana Society Keepsakes*; sponsorship of professional and lay conferences, seminars, lectures, and exhibitions; commemoration of historic events, including sponsorship of markers and plaques; and assistance to the North Carolina Collection and North Caroliniana Gallery of the University of North Carolina Library and other cultural organizations, such as the Friends of the Library, the Friends of the Archives, the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association, the Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina, and the North Carolina Writers Conference.

Incorporated by H. G. Jones, William S. Powell, and Louis M. Connor, Jr., who soon were joined by a distinguished group of North Carolinians, the Society was limited to one hundred members for its first decade. However, it does elect from time to time additional individuals meeting its strict criterion of "adjudged performance" in service to their state's culture—i.e., those who have demonstrated a continuing interest in and support of the historical, literary, and cultural heritage of North Carolina. The Society, a tax-exempt organization under provisions of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, expects service rather than dues. For its programs, it depends upon the contributions, bequests, and devises of its members and friends. Its IRS number is 56-1119848. Upon request, contributions to the Society may be counted toward membership in the Chancellor's Club. The Society administers the Archie K. Davis Fund, given in 1987 by the Research Triangle Foundation in honor of its retiring board chairman and the Society's longtime president.

A highlight of the Society's year is the presentation of the North Caroliniana Society Award for long and distinguished service in the encouragement, production, enhancement, promotion, and preservation of North Caroliniana. Starting with Paul Green, the Society has recognized Tar Heels such as Albert Coates, Sam J. Ervin, Jr., Sam Ragan, Gertrude S. Carraway, John Fries Blair, William and Ida Friday, William S. Powell, Mary and James Semans, and David Stick. The proceedings of the awards banquets, published in the *Imprints* series, furnish rare glimpses into the lives of those recognized.

The Society has its headquarters in the North Carolina Collection, the "Conscience of North Carolina," which seeks to preserve for present and future generations all that has been or is published by North Carolinians regardless of subject and about North Carolina and North Carolinians regardless of author or source. In this mission the Collection's clientele is far broader than the University community; indeed, it is the entire citizenry of North Carolina, as well as those outside the state whose research extends to North Carolina or North Carolinians. Members of the North Caroliniana Society share a very special relationship to this unique Collection that dates back to 1844 and stands unchallenged as the largest and most comprehensive repository in America of published materials about a single state. The North Caroliniana Gallery, opened in 1988, adds exhibition and interpretive dimensions to the Collection's traditional services. These combined resources fulfill the vision of President David L. Swain (1801-1868), who founded the Collection; Librarian Louis Round Wilson (1876-1979), who nurtured it; and Philanthropist John Sprunt Hill (1869-1961), who generously endowed it. All North Carolinians are enriched by this precious legacy.

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